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[Circuit of the Northwest to start construction on motorsports park next year](#)

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Circuit of the Northwest's Brian Nilsen gets ready to don his motorcycle helmet for his grand entrance on the bike behind the sports cars on display at the Bremerton National Airport inside the Avian Flight Center hangar on Friday. (Photo: MEEGAN M. REID / KITSAP SUN)

BREMERTON NATIONAL AIRPORT — Circuit of the Northwest, the group behind a proposed \$33 million raceway and motorsports park facility in South Kitsap, is moving forward with the project and expects to start construction in 2020.

The project — which would include a 2.6-mile road course, clubhouse, car storage, and multiple public facilities for education, first responder training and recreation — is planned for 230 acres of Port of Bremerton-owned land west of Highway 3 near Bremerton National Airport.

While construction on the multi-use facility won't begin until next year, a ceremonial groundbreaking event Friday at the airport signified a big step forward for what supporters say will be significant economic and community asset.

"I'm excited, it's been a long road you know, and I've been working on this daily for pretty much five years," Circuit of the Northwest owner Brian Nilsen said.

The event marked the launch of private memberships to help fund construction. A membership, which costs \$62,500 (with a \$10,000 deposit), comes with access to the facility's clubhouse, car storage and 150 days a year of track time.

Funding for the \$33 million motorsports park will include a mix of memberships, private investors and public funds, according to Megan Godfrey with KempersLesnik, the public relations firm for the project. Circuit of the Northwest is looking to partner with an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and has pitched the motorsports park to the Kitsap Public Facilities District to help fund the public parts of the project.

"The facility will change the way people view motorsports," Nilsen told gathered supporters Friday. "Through a unique public-private partnership, we are able to create a diverse sports and entertainment experience, but also realize significant economic benefits for this community."

In addition to the 2.6-mile road course, the facility will also feature a motocross track, areas for autocross and karting, a driving skills training area, an indoor shooting range, RV Park, and space for concerts and festivals. A STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education center is also part of the plan.



A rendering of Circuit of the Northwest's planned \$33 million raceway project near the Port of Bremerton. (Photo: Circuit of the Northwest)

Raceway supporters say the project will be an economic development boon for the county, with the potential to attract high-profile racing events and tourism dollars.

Ralph Morton, executive director of the Seattle Sports Commission, called the project "a truly game-changing opportunity" for Bremerton and the Puget Sound Region.

"Motorsports is a new industry in the region and so because this is in Bremerton, people are going to be coming here from around the world," Morton said. "They're going to come through Seattle, they're going to go through SeaTac airport, they're going to spend time in Kitsap County, they're going to spend time throughout the region."

On Friday, local first responders spoke in favor of a new location to use for driving training, and a representative of Central Kitsap School District praised the STEM center as a place for students to get on-hand experience and learn technical skills.

Nilsen, citing project market studies, said construction of the facility and the first year of operation could create 500 jobs and bring in \$50 million in revenue.

“We believe this to be the best and most important economic development project in the region today,” Port of Bremerton commissioner Axel Strakeljahn said.



Attendees of Circuit of the Northwest's groundbreaking ceremony are reflected in the window of a Porsche GT3RS on display at the Bremerton National Airport inside the Avian Flight Center hangar on Friday. (Photo: MEEGAN M. REID / KITSAP SUN)

But the public parts of the facility depend in part on how successful Circuit of the Northwest is with the Kitsap Public Facilities District.

Last year, Circuit of the Northwest pitched the raceway project to the PFD in hopes of receiving more funding. The district uses a state sales tax rebate to fund projects with economic and community benefits in the county.

The PFD's board of commissioners approved \$60,000 for a feasibility study and later [\\$500,000 to engineer the project](#). But the board has not committed any funding for construction of public facilities to accompany the racetrack, PFD executive director Mike Walton said.

Right now, the PFD is still waiting to see exactly how much money it will have available, and also needs to [consider several other projects that are asking for public funds](#).

Without public funding, some aspects of the project — including the STEM center — will have to be scaled back, Nilsen said. The motocross, karting, RV Park and concert areas will be included regardless of PFD funding.

Some clearing work will begin on the property this year, with construction expected to begin in the third quarter of 2020, Nilsen said. The timeline for construction depends on memberships, naming rights,

private investors and technology partnerships, according to Godfrey. The goal is to get 100 members before construction begins and 300 by the time the facility opens. The projected opening is 2021.

"I'm just excited for today, it's emotional, it's something that our county, our area needs to know about because there's a lot of misinformation out there," Nilsen said. "People view it has a racetrack, which they might be right three or four times a year, but the other 300 and something-odd days a year, it'll be utilized for our community."